IV

SAMUEL ADAMS

The Man of the Town-Meeting

"The old Teutonic Assembly rose again to full life in the New England town-meeting."—*Freeman.*

"Samuel Adams, the helmsman of the Revolution at its origin, the truest representative of the home rule of Massachusetts in its town-meetings and General Court."—*Bancroft.*

"A man whom Plutarch, if he had only lived late enough, would have delighted to include in his gallery of worthies,—a man who in the history of the American Revolution is second only to Washington,—Samuel Adams."—*John Fiske.*

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HERBERT B. ADAMS, Editor

History is past Politics and Politics present History — *Freeman*

SECOND SERIES

IV

SAMUEL ADAMS

The Man of the Town-Meeting

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SAMUEL ADAMS,

THE MAN OF THE TOWN-MEETING.[1]

The Folk-Mote.

We are taught by the science of our time that if any organic body be analyzed, we reach at length the primordial cell; beyond this it is impossible to go. Like the body of a tree or the body of a man, so a body-politic has its primordial cell.[2] What is the proper primordial cell of a free Anglo-Saxon state?

In transacting the business of a nation, the mass of the people can act only through representatives, the sovereign or president who is put in the supreme place,—the Congress or Parliament, who are set to make the laws. As regards the sub-divisions of a nation, even in transacting the business of a county, things are quite too large and complicated to be managed in any other way than by delegates appointed for that purpose. But somewhere the people ought to act of themselves. "It is not by instinct," says a wise writer,[3] whose words are here abridged, "that men are able to form a proper judgment as to the qualifications and acts of their rep-

[1] This paper is based on studies for a new life of Samuel Adams.

[2] Herbert B. Adams: "The Germanic Origin of New England Towns," p. 5.

[3] J. Toulmin Smith, "Local Self-Government and Centralization," p. 29, etc.

resentatives. Such judgment can never be got by men in any other way than by habitual and free discussion, among themselves, of similar subjects. Through a certain independence of thought, and conduct, to be only acquired by being continually called on to talk and act in public affairs, do men become fit to elect representatives and judge of their conduct. Representative assemblies must exist for the more convenient carrying on of business, but regular, fixed, frequent, and accessible meetings of the individual freemen should also take place, in which public matters shall be laid before the people, by them to be discussed, and approved or disapproved. It is such local self-government that affords the most valuable education, both as to thought and action; the faculties of man will have this as their best school. As long as everything is done for them, men have no occasion to think at all, and will soon become incapable of thinking: but the moment they are thrown on their own resources, they wake from their torpor. It becomes necessary that they should act; and to act, they must think.

No name was ever devised which more fully expressed a reality than the word "Folk-mote," discussion by the assembled people. Throughout the Anglo-Saxon laws, indeed, in the earliest accounts of the Teutons, we find continual reference to the "Folk-mote," and long after the coming of William the Conqueror, the thing is to be traced.[1] It was the duty, enforced by penalties, of every man, to attend his Folk-mote, in order to discharge there the responsibilities which attached to him as a member of the state. There existed in England a system of local self-government by which there were fixed, frequent, and accessible meetings together of the folk or people, for discussing and determining

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[1] Tacitus: Germania, XI. Waitz: Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte, Band I, 4. Freeman: Growth of English Constitution, p. 17. May: Constitutional History of England, II, 460. Phillips: Geschichte des Angelsächsischen Rechts, p. 12.

upon all matters of common interest,—a system, the skeleton of which still exists, though it has been much overlaid. The fact is clear and unmistakable that there existed a system of local self-government minutely ramified and wisely devised so that there should be meetings together of the people in every part for the common purposes of getting justice nigh-at-hand, and also of understanding, discussing, and determining upon all matters of common interest."

This Folk-mote it is which lies, or should lie, at the foundation of everything in an Anglo-Saxon free state. For convenience' sake, in carrying on large affairs, representation must come in; but below that must be the assembly of the people, discussing and judging the public business, their interest roused, their faculties trained, from the fact that they so discuss and judge. This is the Primordial Cell of an Anglo-Saxon body-politic—this Folk-mote. Can the Folk-mote be found in America?

At the time of the colonization of America, the old self-government of the people had been, in England, in great part lost. The responsibility for the misfortune was a double one. It rested to some extent with the people themselves, who forgot their birth-right,—to some extent also with the kings and great men, who forgot they were only ministers of the people and assumed to be their masters. The sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth century found on the throne of England a race of kings who believed they ruled *jure divino*, owning little responsibility to the people in their exercise of power; the people had few rights, in the idea of these sovereigns, which they were bound to respect. Let us look at the colonies which were sent forth at this time. When the founders of New England established themselves, they did not reproduce the state of things they had left behind, nor on the other hand did they invent something new. They went back to those old ways which the English had to so large an extent forsaken. The little company of poor men had signed the compact in the cabin of the "Mayflower," to be mutually

bound by laws which all were to have a voice in framing, had set foot on the lonely bowlder, which now seems almost likely to be worn away by the reverent trampling of the multitudes who visit it, and exploring for a little, had built their camp-fires at last where sweet water gushed freely from the bosom of a hill. They felt forgotten by the world. Doing what was easiest to be done, following traditions which, so to speak, had come down in their blood, they set apart certain land to be held in common, a homestead for each man, built a fort of timber on the hill close by, ran their palisade where danger seemed most to threaten, established certain simple rules, and lo, when all was done, the little settlement was throughout, as to internal constitution and external features, essentially the same as an Anglo-Saxon "tun" or "burh," such as a boat-load of the followers of Hengist or Cerdic might have set up, as they coasted, searching for a home, along the isle of Thanet—or further back still, the same essentially as a village of the Weser shore or the Odenwald, set up in the primeval heathen days.[1]

When, ten years later, Winthrop with his followers came to settle Boston, they were richer, more numerous, better educated, but it was convenient for them, too, to go back to the old forms. Ship followed ship, almost unnoticed in the old world, where the minds of men were absorbed in the struggle between king and parliament, which presently burst into war. Twenty-one thousand, at length, sailing toward the beckoning finger of Cape Cod, had found a refuge in Massachusetts bay. They spread from the coast into the interior, through blazed paths of the forest, led by Indian guides to rich intervales in distant valleys, clustering about water-falls where fish abounded and where the grain could be ground, or in spots where there seemed a chance for mining. What determined the size of the towns was always conven-

[1] Edward A. Freeman: Introd. to American Institut. History, p. 15. Herbert B. Adams: Germanic Origin of N. E. Towns.

ience in getting to the Sunday meeting; for to church all were obliged to go, under penalty of fine or severe punishment. More often than not on the summit of some hill the meeting-house was built. The valleys, heavy with forest, were swampy and dangerous. As the country has cleared, the morasses have dried and the valleys have become the pleasant places; but in many an old town, the meeting-house remains perched on its summit, away from the modern dwellings which it has been more suitable, at length, to place in the low land. Where the meeting-house is with the dwellings, one can often find, hunting among the huckleberry bushes on the deserted hill-top close by, the foundation of the first temple, reared before the Indians and the wolves were gone. About in the territory, never so far away that it would be inconvenient on Sunday to go to meeting, the population spread itself. The twenty-one thousand that sought the wilderness were at first neglected, in good part lost sight of. Left to themselves, each group of inhabitants bound together about the meeting-house, near which generally rose also the school, contrived, for the regulation of affairs which interested all alike, the forms which came most handy, and these were the forms in England to so large an extent crowded out,—the Folk-mote with its accompaniments, the local self-government of the Anglo-Saxon days, revived with a faithfulness of which the colonists themselves were not at all conscious. At last in the middle of the last century, the mother country suddenly became aware that her American children had grown rich and powerful. In the great wars with France, when Louisburg, and at last Quebec, were captured, and England became mistress of the continent, the colonies furnished a great army, who marched and fought with the British regulars, and helped as much as they to the victories that were gained. Their vessels, too, were upon every sea. On the coast and in the interior, the towns, at first so feeble, were growing large and rich. "They must be looked to more closely," said the English rulers. "Their

trade must be regulated, so that England can reap an advantage from it; they must be taxed to help pay for these great wars we have been waging largely on their account," and so began the series of events that brought, in '76, the freedom of America.

At that time, in Massachusetts, then including Maine, and containing 210,000 white inhabitants, more than were found in any other American colony, there were more than two hundred towns, whose constitution is thus described by a writer of the revolutionary period:[1] "Every town is an incorporated republic. The selectmen by their own authority, or upon the application of a certain number of townsmen, issue a warrant for the calling of a town-meeting. The warrant mentions the business to be engaged in, and no other can be legally executed. The inhabitants are warned to attend; and they that are present, though not a quarter or tenth of the whole, have a right to proceed. They choose a president by the name of Moderator, who regulates the proceedings of the meeting. Each individual has an equal liberty of delivering his opinion, and is not liable to be silenced or brow-beaten by a richer or greater townsman than himself. Every freeman or free-holder gives his vote or not, and for or against, as he pleases; and each vote weighs equally, whether that of the highest or lowest inhabitant. . . . All the New England towns are on the same plan in general."

"A New England town-meeting," says E. A. Freeman, "is essentially the same thing as the Folk-mote."[2] Shall we find the Folk-mote in the other colonies? Turning first to Virginia,[3] the great representative colony of the South, as Massachusetts is of the North, in the eighteenth century we find here an ordered life, though the heterogeneous character of the

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[1] Gordon: History of Independence of U. S., I, 262.
[2] Amer. Institut. History, p. 16.
[3] John Esten Cooke: "Virginia."

colony makes the task of description a less simple one than in the case of her Northern sister. Virginia contains 173,000 whites, and 120,000 blacks. In what is called the "Tidewater-region," there appears at the top of society an aristocracy of landed proprietors, a society constituted after the model existing at the same time in England, and not at all reviving the features of the more ancient period, as was done in Massachusetts.[1] The law of primogeniture being rigidly maintained, each great estate, consisting often of thousands of acres, descends in each generation to the eldest son, his brothers and sisters being slightly portioned, if at all. There are indeed small farmers in the Tidewater-region, a class springing in part from unportioned younger sons, in part from later immigrants, who are at a disadvantage as to getting hold of the soil: this class, however, is unimportant as compared with the landed magnates, with whom lies all social prestige, and for the most part, political power.

The particular form into which society in Virginia arranges itself, is much affected by the special industry to which the colony has become almost exclusively devoted, the raising of tobacco. On the great estates the laborious process of producing the invariable crop can be most conveniently left to the hands of negroes. Everything favors the development of slavery, and slaves soon come to make up nearly half of the population. In a condition not very different from that of the slaves are the indented white servants. These are penniless immigrants, sometimes English convicts or paupers, shipped to the New World and bound out for a term of years by the government,—sometimes people of more respectable antecedents, who in return for their passage-money freely give themselves into practical serfdom. In these circumstances, labor necessarily falls into disrepute: a class of poor whites arises, descendants of those so unfortunately placed as to be unable to obtain land or of those who

[1] E. A. Freeman: Amer. Institut. Hist., p. 17.

lack energy to do so, who squat on the plantations in out-of-the-way swamps or woods, push into the wilderness as hunters and trappers, or tramp as roving vagabonds from estate to estate.

In striking contrast with Massachusetts, there is in Virginia no town-life. Norfolk, with about 7,000 people, is the only place of importance. Williamsburg has no consequence except as the point at which the House of Burgesses meets, and the seat of the College of William and Mary. The inhabitants are scattered throughout the vast counties, with no rallying-points, but the manor-houses of the planters. Of manufacturing of any kind there is no trace, and the class of honorable merchants is almost unknown. It is indispensable to each great plantation that it should be accessible from the sea, a condition easily supplied through the magnificent streams which afford paths everywhere into the interior from the Chesapeake. Each planter has his own wharf and warehouse, to which his negroes bring yearly at harvest the great tobacco-yield, while English or Yankee ships, freighted with foreign manufactures to be given in exchange, lie ready to receive it.

The typical Virginian at the middle of the eighteenth century was devoted to the English king and church. If he possessed overweening family pride, extravagance, and contempt for work, he had also the splendid virtues of a cavalier class, generosity, bravery and hospitality. He was often highly accomplished, with acquirements and graces brought from the schools of England, to which many a Virginia boy was sent; or if that opportunity were denied, the College of William and Mary was quite able to impart an elegant culture. Even the poor whites, forlorn as they were for all purposes of peaceful, well-ordered society, possessed qualities which fitted them admirably to be frontiersmen and soldiers. Many a planter could claim descent from historic stock; and sometimes, as in the case of the old Lord Fairfax, who established for himself a broad sylvan domain in the valley of the

Shenandoah, and lived there like the banished duke of "As You Like It" in the "Forest of Arden," the blood of the Virginians was of the noblest.

There was, however, another Virginia than that of the Tidewater-region. Into the valley between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghanies, and even farther west, just before the Revolution, immigrants were beginning to press. Part of them were Germans, a rill from the current which was pouring into Central Pennsylvania; part were Scotch Irish, kindred of the men who defended Londonderry against James II. These had little sympathy or share with the Old Dominion. The Germans were rigid Lutherans and thoroughly peasants; the Scotch Irish were of no higher social rank and strict Presbyterians. The cares and dangers of frontier life quite absorbed them. If their representatives were in the House of Burgesses, there is little trace of it. When the Revolution had once fairly begun, indeed, pastor Mühlenberg led his flock from the Shenandoah valley to battle for the cause of the colonies, and Daniel Morgan with his stalwart riflemen, in buckskin and fringe, stood from first to last as the very flower of the American troops, by the side of Washington; but these frontiersmen were of another spirit than their eastern neighbors.

If we contrast now the colonial life of Virginia with that of Massachusetts, we shall find some marked differences. The isolation of the great estates at the South made it out of the question for the men to come together as in the compact communities of the North; the more heterogeneous character of society in the former case, moreover, interfered with the disposition to come together. Instead, therefore, of a state made up of small democratic communities, within each one of which the men, gathered in town-meeting, governed themselves, a state came to pass the people of which had little opportunity or desire for the general discussion of public measures; care for political matters was, in the mass of men, very slight, from the fact that a class small in number almost

monopolized property and power. The territorial magnates were all-in-all. In the House of Burgesses at Williamsburg, the great planters came together and few besides. Among them, indeed, political interest was keen enough. Each had a great stake in the country; each was accustomed to power and fond of wielding it. In this aristocratic legislature the energy was great, and the spirit of freedom very manifest. The royal governors found the body often intractable; constant bickering prevailed between them and the Assembly, through which the latter learned the habit of calling into question the authority of the king, and also came to love an atmosphere of strife. Hence, when the mother-land grew arbitrary, none were more prompt than the House of Burgesses of Virginia to call the king and his ministers to account. At the outbreak of war they came quickly to the front. America took its leader from among them, and during the first years of our independence Virginia was "the mother of presidents."

In the New England Legislatures, each delegate, in no wise superior to those who sent him in wealth or position, stood for the little democracy, the Folk-mote, the town that sent him. He was not his own man except in so far as his superior ability or character made his townsmen give way to him. He was carefully instructed what course he must pursue; was liable to sharp censure if he went against the wishes of his closely-watching constituents, and each year must submit himself anew to the suffrages of his townsmen, who promptly consigned him to private life if his course had been disapproved.

There was then no Folk-mote in Virginia. In all of the thirteen colonies, as regards this proper primordial cell of a republican body politic, it existed in well-developed form only in the New England town-meeting. Of the group of Southern Colonies, while in the case of each there were peculiarities of constitution,[1] as regards the present point

[1] B. James Ramage: Local Government in South Carolina.

Virginia may be taken as the type. Nor in the Middle Colonies is the case much different. In New York the Dutch were long enough in possession to stamp upon the settlement an impress not at all democratic. Along the Hudson, the patroons, on their estates fronting sixteen miles on the river and running back indefinitely, had established a kind of feudal system, which the German settlers who came later into the valley of the Mohawk, and the waifs from all lands, who with the English occupied the neighborhood of Manhattan, did little to modify. In Pennsylvania and Maryland, the great proprietaries were subordinate monarchs beneath an English suzerainty, exercising a rule over a population containing many elements besides English, which was far from favorable to democracy. Throughout the length and breadth of the thirteen colonies then, at the time of the Revolution, New England stood alone in having restored a primitive liberty which had been superseded, her little democracies governing each itself after a fashion for which there was no precedent without going back to the Folk-mote of a remote day—to a time before the kings of England began to be arbitrary and before the people became indifferent to their birth-right.

Have New Englanders preserved their town-meeting? Thirteen million, or about one-quarter of the inhabitants of the United States, are believed to be descendants of the 21,000, who, in the dark days of Stuart domination, came from among the friends of Cromwell and Hampden, to people the North-East. In large proportion they have forsaken their old seats, following the parallels of latitude along the lakes into the great North-West, and now at length across the continent to California and Oregon. At the beginning of the century, Grayson wrote to Madison[1] that "the New Englanders are amazingly attached to their custom of planting by townships." So it has always been: wherever New Eng-

[1] Bancroft: Hist. of Constitution, I., p. 181.

landers have had power to decide as to the constitution of a forming state, it has had at the basis the township. But in the immense dilution which this element of population has constantly undergone, through the human flood from all lands, which, side by side with it, has poured into the new territories, its influence has of necessity been often greatly weakened, and the form of the township has been changed from the original pattern, seldom advantageously.[1] In New England itself, moreover, a similar cause has modified somewhat the old circumstances. While multitudes of the ancient stock have forsaken the granite hills, their places have been supplied by a Celtic race, energetic and prolific, whose teeming families throng city and village, threatening to outnumber the Yankee element, depleted as it has been by the emigration of so many of its most vigorous children. To these newcomers must be added now the French Canadians, who, following the track of their warlike ancestors down the river-valleys, have come by thousands into the manufacturing towns and into the woods, an industrious but unprogressive race, good hands in the mills and marvellously dextrous at wielding the axe. Whatever may be said of the virtues of these new-comers, and, of course, a long list could be made out for them, they have not been trained to Anglo-Saxon self-government. We have seen the origin of the Folk-mote far back in Teutonic antiquity. As established in New England, it is a revival of a most ancient thing. The institution is uncongenial to any but Teutonic men; the Irishman and Frenchman are not at home in it, and cannot accustom themselves to it, until, as the new generations come forward, they take on the characteristics of the people among whom they have come to cast their lot. At present, in most old New

[1] S. A. Galpin: Walker's Statistical Atlas of U. S., II, 10. Albert Shaw: Local Government in Illinois. E. W. Bemis: Local Government in Michigan and the North-west. E. R. L. Gould: Local Government in Pennsylvania.

England towns, we find an element of the population numbering hundreds, often thousands, who are sometimes quite inert, allowing others to decide all things for them; sometimes voting in droves in an unintelligent way as some whipper-in may direct; sometimes in unreasoning partisanship following through thick and thin a cunning demagogue, quite careless how the public welfare may suffer by his coming to the front.

Still another circumstance which threatens the Folk-mote is the multiplication of cities. When a community of moderate size which has gone forward under its town-meeting, at length increases so far as to be entitled to a city charter, the day is commonly hailed by ringing of bells and salutes of cannon. But the assuming of a city charter has been declared to be "an almost complete abnegation of practical democracy. The people cease to govern themselves; once a year they choose those who are to govern for them. Instead of the town-meeting discussions and votes, one needs now to spend only ten minutes, perhaps, in a year. No more listening to long debates about schools, roads, and bridges. One has only to drop a slip of paper, containing a list which some one has been kind enough to prepare for him, into a box, and he has done his duty as a citizen."[1] In the most favorable circumstances, the mayor and common-council, representing the citizens, do the work for them, while individuals are discharged from the somewhat burdensome, but so educating and quickening duties of the Folk-mote. As yet the way has not been discovered through which in an American city, the primordial cell of our liberty may be preserved from atrophy.

Boston Town.

If one wishes to study the American Folk-mote, the Town-meeting, with care, he will turn then to some town of New

[1] *New York Nation:* May 29, 1866.

England. To find a town at its most characteristic stage, he will not, for reasons that have been mentioned, take it as it stands at present; nor, on the other hand, will it be well to go back to the earliest period, when things were forming. The New England town is best presented at an intermediate point when it has had time to become fully developed, and before the causes have begun to operate which have largely changed it. The period of the Revolution, in fact, is the epoch that must be selected; and the town of towns in which everything that is most distinctive appears most plainly, is Boston.

Boston was a town, governed by its Folk-mote, almost from its foundation until 1822, more than one hundred and eighty years. In 1822, when the inhabitants numbered forty thousand, it reluctantly became a city, giving up its town-meetings because they had grown so large as to be unmanageable,—the people choosing a mayor and common-council to do the public business for them, instead of doing it themselves. The records of the town of Boston, carefully preserved from the earliest times, lie open to public inspection in the office of the city-clerk. Whoever pores over these records, on the yellow paper, in the faded ink, as it came from the pens of the ancient town-clerks, will find that for the first hundred years, the freemen are occupied for the most part with their local concerns. How the famous cow-paths pass through the phases of their evolution—footway, country-lane, high-road,—until at length they become the streets and receive dignified names. What ground shall be taken for burying-places, and how it shall be fenced as the little settlement gradually covers the whole peninsula,—how the Neck, then a very consumptive looking neck, not *goitred* by a ward or two of brick and mortar-covered territory, may be protected, so that it may not be guillotined by some sharp north-easter,—what precautions shall be taken against the spread of small-pox,—who shall see to it that dirt shall not be thrown into the town-dock,—that inquiry shall be made whether

Latin may not be better taught in the public-schools,—such topics as these are considered. The town-clerks always make a particular point of describing the "visitation of the schools." The selectmen invite every year, in May, a long list, sometimes forty or fifty, comprising the great people of the Province, with any notable strangers there may be in town, to be present at the inspection. For the most part, the record is tedious and unimportant detail for a modern reader, though now and then in an address to the sovereign, or a document that implies all is not harmony between the town and royal governor, the horizon broadens a little. But soon after the middle of the eighteenth century, the record largely changes. William Cooper, at length, begins his service of forty-nine years as town-clerk, starting out in 1761, with a bold, round hand, which gradually becomes faint and tremulous as the writer descends into old age. One may well turn over the musty pages here with no slight feeling of awe, for it is the record, made at the moment, of one of the most memorable struggles of human history, that between the little town of Boston on the one hand, and George III, with all the power of England at his back, on the other.

Massachusetts was unquestionably the leader in the Revolution. "The ring-leading colony," Lord Camden called it at the time. Says the latest English writer: "The spirit driving the colonies to separation from England, a principle attracting and conglobing them into a new union among themselves,—how early did this spirit show itself in the New England colonies? It was not present in all the colonies. It was not present in Virginia; but when the colonial discontents burst into a flame, then was the moment when Virginia went over to New England, and the spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers found the power to turn the offended colonists into a new nation."[1] Lecky too declares:[2] "The Central and

[1] Professor J. R. Seeley: "The Expansion of England," pp. 154–155.
[2] Hist. of XVIIIth Century, III, p. 386.

Southern colonies long hesitated to follow New England. Massachusetts had thrown herself with fierce energy into the conflict and soon drew the other provinces in her wake." After the first year of war, indeed, the soil of New England, as compared with the Centre and South, suffered little from the scourge of hostile military occupation. Her sacrifices however did not cease. There is no way of determining how many New England militia took the field during the strife; the multitude was certainly vast. The figures, however, as regards the more regular levies have been preserved and are significant.[1] With a population comprising scarcely more than one-third of the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies, New England furnished 118,251 of the 231,791 Continental troops that figured in the war. Massachusetts alone furnished 67,907, more than one-quarter of the entire number. There resistance to British encroachment began; from thence disaffection to Britain was spread abroad. As Massachusetts led the thirteen colonies, the town of Boston led Massachusetts.[2] The ministers of George III recognized this leadership and attacked Boston first. So thoroughly did the forces of revolt centre here that the English pamphleteers, seeking to uphold the government-cause, speak sometimes not so much of Americans, or New Englanders, or, indeed, men of Massachusetts, as of Bostonians, as if it were with the people of that one little town that the fight was to be waged. Boston led the thirteen colonies. Who led the town of Boston? He certainly ought to be a memorable figure in the struggle.

At the date of the Stamp Act, 1765, the population of Boston was not far from 18,000, in vast majority of English blood; though a few families of Huguenots, like the Faneuils, the Bowdoins, the Reveres, and the Molineux, had

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[1] Hildreth, III, 441.

[2] "This province began it—I might say this town [Boston]—for here the arch-rebels formed their scheme long ago." Gen. Gage to Lord Dartmouth, quoted in Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson, p. 16.

strengthened the stock by being crossed with it, and there was now and then a Scotchman or an Irishman. As the Bostonians were of one race, so in vast majority they were of one faith, Independents of Cromwell's type, though there were Episcopalians, and a few Quakers and Baptists. The town drew its life from the sea, to which all its industry was more or less closely related. Hundreds of men were afloat much of the time, captains or before the mast, leaving their wives and children in the town, but themselves on shore only at intervals, from the most enterprising voyages. Of the landsmen, a large proportion were ship-builders. The staunchest crafts that sailed slid by the dozen down the ways of the Boston yards. New England needed a great fleet, having as she did a good part of the carrying-trade of the thirteen colonies, with that of the West Indies also. Another industry less salutary was the distilling of rum; and much of this went in the ships of Boston and Newport men to the coast of Africa, to be exchanged for slaves. It was a different world from ours, and should be judged by different standards. Besides the branches mentioned, there was little manufacturing in town or country; the policy of the mother-country was to discourage colonial manufactures; everything must be made in England, the colonies being chiefly valuable from the selfish consideration that they could be made to afford a profitable market for the goods. In the interior, therefore, the people were all farmers, bringing their produce to Boston, and taking thence when they went home such English goods as they needed. Hence the town was a great mart. The merchants were numerous and rich; the distilleries fumed; the shipyards rattled; the busy ships went in and out, and the country people flocked in to the centre.

Though Boston lost before the Revolution the distinction of being the largest town in America, it remained the intellectual head of the country. Its common-schools gave every child a good education, and Harvard College, scarcely out of sight, and practically a Boston institution, gave a training

hardly inferior to that of the European universities of the day. At the bottom of the social scale were the negro slaves. The newspapers have many advertisements of slaves for sale, and of runaways sought by their masters. Slavery, however, was far on the wane, and soon after the Revolution became extinguished. The negroes were for the most part servants in families, not workmen at trades, and so exercised little influence in the way of bringing labor into disrepute.

As the slaves were at the bottom, so at the top of society were the ministers, men often of fine force, ability, and education. No other such career as the ministry afforded was open in those days to ambitious men. Year by year the best men of each Cambridge class went into the ministry, and the best of them were sifted out for the Boston pulpit. Jonathan Mayhew, Andrew Eliot, Samuel Cooper, Charles Chauncey, Mather Byles,—all were characters of mark, true to the Puritan standards, generally, as regards faith, eloquent in their office, friends and advisers of the political leaders, themselves often political leaders, foremost in the public meetings, and active in private. Usually these ministers were grave men, the traditions of the Province imposing upon them a severity of deportment which would seem to us harsh; but they had a genial side which ought not to be overlooked. "Don't you recollect," writes John Adams to his wife, recalling a reminiscence of a small-pox scare,[1] "Dr. Byles' benediction to me when I was inoculated? I lay lolling on my bed with half a dozen young fellows as lazy as myself, all waiting and wishing for symptoms and eruptions, when all of a sudden appeared at the door the reverend Doctor with his rosy face, many-curled wig, and pontifical air and gait. Says he: 'The clergy of this town ought, upon this occasion, to adopt the benediction of the Romish clergy, and when we enter the apartment of the sick, to say in the foreign pronunciation, "Pax tecum!"' These words are spoken by for-

[1] Philadelphia, Aug. 25, 1776. Adams told this same story to young Josiah Quincy in 1821. "Figures of the Past," p. 70.

eigners as the doctor pronounced them, Pox take 'em!" It is a pleasant tradition, too, that has been handed down of this merry old Tory, that when he was put under guard by the patriots, finding that the sentinel, a simple bumpkin, wished to go away, Dr. Byles kindly offered to pace the beat for him; whereupon the soldier gave up musket and accoutrements, and the doctor tramped back and forth with his piece at the shoulder, serenely nodding to Whig and Tory, as he kept guard over himself. Nor is Dr. Byles the hero of all the good stories that have come down of the revolutionary parsons.

"Scip," said Dr. Chauncey to his old negro, turning testily from the writing of a sermon, "What do you want?" "Want a new coat, Massa." "Well, ask Mrs. Chauncey to give you an old one of mine." "Nebber do in de world, Massa, for old Scip to wear a black coat. If I go walking on de Neck Saturday, Dr. Cooper ask me to preach for him, sure." The doctor burst into a laugh, told Scip he might have a coat of all the colors of the rainbow, and went straight out, with cocked hat and gold-headed cane, to tell the joke at the expense of his neighbor, who had the reputation of being rather indiscriminate in his invitations.[1]

Together with the ministers, the merchants were a class of influence. Nothing could be bolder than the spirit in those days of Boston commerce. In ships built at the yards of the town, the Yankee crews went everywhere through the world. Timber, tobacco, tar, rice, from the Southern colonies, wheat from Maryland, sugar and molasses from the West Indies, sought the markets of the world in New England craft. The laws of trade were complicated and oppressive; but every skipper was more or less a smuggler, and knew well how to brave or evade authority. Wealth flowed fast into the pockets of the Boston merchants, who built and furnished fine mansions, walked King Street in gold lace and

[1] Tudor's Life of Otis, p. 449.

fine ruffles, or sat at home, as John Hancock is described, in "a red velvet cap, within which was one of fine linen, the edge of this turned up over the velvet one two or three inches. He wore a blue damask gown lined with silk, a white plaited stock, a white silk embroidered waistcoat, black silk small-clothes, white silk stockings, and red morocco slippers." It is all still made real to us in the superb portraits of Copley,—the merchants sitting in their carved chairs, while a chart of distant seas unrolled on the table, or a glimpse through a richly curtained window at the back, at a busy wharf or a craft under full sail, hints at the employment that has lifted the men to wealth and consequence.

Below the merchants, the class of workmen formed a body most energetic. Dealing with the tough oak that was to be shaped into storm-defying hulls, twisting the cordage that must stand the strain of arctic ice and tropic hurricane, forging anchors that must hold off the lee-shores of all tempestuous seas,—this was work to bring out vigor of muscle, and also of mind and temper. The caulkers were bold politicians, and have given perhaps to political nomenclature one of the best known terms. The rope-walk hands were energetic to turbulence, courting the brawls with the soldiers which led to the Boston massacre. It must be said, too, that the taverns throve. New England rum was very plentiful, the cargo of many a ship that passed the "Outer Light," of many a townsman and high private who came to harsh words and, perhaps, fisticuffs in Pudding Lane or Dock Square. The prevailing tone of the town, however, was decent and grave. The churches were thronged on Sundays and at Thursday lecture as they have not been since. All classes were readers; the book-sellers fill whole columns in the newspapers with their lists; there are books on sale and in the circulating libraries, the best then being in all departments of literature. The five newspapers the people may be said to have edited themselves. Instead of the impersonal articles of a modern journal, the space in a sheet of the Revolution, after the news

and advertisements, was occupied by letters, in which "A Chatterer," "A. Z.," or more often some classic character, "Sagittarius," "Vindex," "Philanthrop," "Valerius Poplicola," "Nov-Anglus," or "Massachusettensis," belabors Whig or Tory, according to his own stripe of politics,—the champion sometimes appearing in a rather Chinese fashion, stilted up on high rhetorical soles, and padded out with pompous period and excessive classic allusion, but often terse, bold, and well-armed from the arsenals of the best political thinkers.

Of course the Folk-mote of such a town as this would have spirit and interest. Wrote a Tory in those days:[1] "The town-meeting at Boston is the hot-bed of sedition. It is there that all their dangerous insurrections are engendered; it is there that the flame of discord and rebellion was first lighted up and disseminated over the provinces; it is therefore greatly to be wished that Parliament may rescue the loyal inhabitants of that town and province from the merciless hand of an ignorant mob, led on and inflamed by self-interested and profligate men." Have more interesting assemblies ever taken place in the history of the world than the Boston town-meetings? Out of them grew the independence of the United States, and what more important event has ever occurred?

The great administration of Pitt had come to an end. France was, and deserved to be, at his feet in disgrace. Canada was lost to the fleur-de-lis; the iron cross from the market-place of Louisburg had come as a trophy to New England, to this day, above the door of the Harvard library, the evidence of the good service the provincials had done. They had aided well the great minister, and the young general who went down in the death-grapple with Montcalm. England was loaded with glory, but also with debt. "No more than

[1] "Sagittarius," quoted by Frothingham: "Sam. Adams' Regiments," *Atlantic Monthly*, Nov. 1863.

fair," said the ministers, and with justice, "that the colonists, who derive much advantage from this, should help pay the debt." So Parliament, with little thought, passed the Stamp Act, that every document of a nature at all formal, every deed, receipt, commission, should have on the corner a certain stamp, to be bought for a few pence of the government. In all probability the colonies could have been brought to pay handsomely, if they had been left to their own free action. The vote in Parliament was taken late at night; the benches were thin; the few members present yawning for bed, glad to dispose of the small affair and finish the session, no one apparently aware that the act was critical. It has been called one of the most momentous legislative acts that ever took place. James Otis was the man who, now that Parliament forgot, stood up to remind it of an old privilege of Englishmen. "No taxation without representation," he said. "America has no representative in Parliament; you cannot legally tax us without our consent." That became presently the cry throughout the thirteen colonies; and, in the mother-country itself, no smaller men than the magnificent Pitt, Lord Camden, the first of English lawyers, and Barre, the comrade of Wolfe, said that the colonists were quite right. But the king, the ministers, and a majority of Parliament declared that all antiquated and superseded. "Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, three-fourths of England, indeed, had no representatives in Parliament, yet they were taxed. How forth-putting for that inferior class of people, our colonists, to set up a cry over a state of things with which Englishmen were satisfied! If there was no formal representation, they were virtually represented." "There is no such thing," said the Boston leaders, "as virtual representation. If Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester, and other great cities are not represented, they ought to be. Either let us send representatives to Parliament, or let our Assemblies tax us." "I rejoice that America has resisted," thundered the wonderful Pitt. "Six millions of freemen so dead to all feelings of liberty as volun-

tarily to submit to be slaves, would be fit instruments to make slaves of the rest." As he spoke America took courage to do what otherwise she would scarcely have ventured upon. The voice of the most powerful of subjects shook all England also. The king, however, was the very type of set purpose; the House of Lords stood at his side almost to a man; in the Commons, the servile, corrupt majority were the "king's friends;" so that although the Stamp Act, for expediency's sake, was repealed, Parliament accompanied the repeal with a Declaratory Act, that it was competent to legislate for the colonies in all cases whatsoever.

When this determination was announced, James Otis, who, from leader in Boston town-meetings, had become conspicuous in the Assembly, thought it right to yield. It is wrong, he said, the ground taken by the Declaratory Act, but we must submit to what Parliament ordains; but others were coming to the front of clearer views and stronger determination. Presently from the Massachusetts Assembly came a statement of what were felt to be the colonial rights, in which the old claim, "No taxation without representation," was reasserted, and a step or two taken in advance of that position. It was, indeed, hinted, and not obscurely, that the claim of Parliament to a right to legislate for the colonies was wrong in other respects besides matters of taxation; that each colony, while owing allegiance to the King, like all parts of the British empire, had yet, in its General Court, a parliament of its own, and that the Lords and Commons at Westminster were utterly without jurisdiction beyond the sea. Presently after this the Massachusetts Assembly caused to be prepared a "Circular Letter," to be sent to the legislatures of the other colonies, in which the ground taken was explained, with the reasons for it, and an invitation conveyed to each colony in turn, to state in reply what seemed to it reasonable in the matter. In England, Parliament promptly condemned the course of Massachusetts, demanding that the Assembly should rescind the "Circular Letter," a demand which the Assembly

met at once by a refusal, the vote standing 92 to 17. Parliament, carrying out the principles of the Declaratory Act, laid taxes upon glass, paper, paints, and tea; that the collection might certainly be enforced, and the rising spirit of discontent in Boston be effectually checked, ships of war were stationed in the harbor, and the 14th and 29th regiments established in the town.

The discontent was by no means confined to Massachusetts. Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire, closely dependent, took their tone from her. In New York was a party prepared to go all lengths with the most strenuous, step for step; there was a party, too, better placed as regards wealth and position, the rich merchants, the Episcopalians generally, the holders of the great feudal estates, the Dutch farmers and recent German settlers, who were either actively loyal to the crown or quite apathetic. In Pennsylvania, there were strong opposers of the English policy, whose leading representative, now that Franklin was absent in England, was John Dickinson, very famous through the "Farmer's Letters," well reasoned papers in which was given a popular explanation of the unconstitutionality of government acts; the powerful sect of Quakers, however, as the trouble deepened, set themselves against resistance to the powers that were, and the Germans felt little interest. Passing to the South, Virginia was all alive. The aristocracy of great tobacco-planters, who held the power, full of vigor and trained to struggle in the long-continued disputes with different royal governors, stood most stubbornly against British encroachment. The colony was far enough from democracy; the large class of poor landless whites had scarcely more interest in politics than the slaves; but the House of Burgesses understood well the championship of American privileges, and was prepared to second, even once or twice to anticipate, Massachusetts in measures of opposition. Influenced in the early day by Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and Dabney Carr, it was sometimes in advance of the northern province, and a

little later, when Washington, Jefferson, and Madison came forward, it stood certainly foremost. In South Carolina, too, was a party headed by Christopher Gadsden, prepared to take the most advanced ground.

In the preliminary years, however, Massachusetts was very plainly before all others, according to the view both of America and England. If sometimes another province was in advance in taking a bold step, it was perhaps due to the management of the skilful Massachusetts statesmen, who, for reasons of policy, held in check their own Assembly, that local pride elsewhere might be conciliated, and America, generally, be brought to present an unbroken front.

"Sam Adams."

It is time now to take a look at the Massachusetts leaders, Boston men with two or three exceptions. On the government side, the foremost champions in these preliminary years were the two royal governors, Francis Bernard, and his successor Thomas Hutchinson. These men have had hard measure in history. In the heat of the battle the patriots could see nothing good in them; the cause they fought for was lost; their enemies having triumphed, handed their names down to obloquy, and few have cared to attempt any vindication. Avoiding all eulogy, it is only just to say as to Bernard, that he was a man respectable in ability and character, who, with fair motives enough, upheld the royal side honestly and energetically against the great majority of the Province. He was an English gentleman, with an Oxford education. His tastes and accomplishments were scholarly; his political ideas were those universally held by the class to which he belonged. Lord Camden said of Bernard in a discussion with Lord Mansfield: "This great, good, and sensible man, of all the governors on the continent, had pointed out the inconvenience of the Stamp Act." He was always opposed to it and

strongly urged its repeal.[1] Botta, too, paints his character in glowing terms.[2]

Hutchinson, also, at the outset of the difficulties, occupied liberal ground.[3] His case in particular at this late day may be kindly considered. He came to the leadership upon Bernard's retirement in 1769. Puritan in faith and in the decorum of his life, he was for many years the best known and most honored son of Massachusetts. He prepared a history of the Province which has still the highest authority. Coming young into public life, he won at once extraordinary confidence. He was early in the Assembly and soon its speaker. He went quickly into the council or upper house of the legislature, became agent of the colony in England, judge of probate, chief-justice, lieutenant-governor, and governor. Much of the time he held several important offices at once. In private life his character was blameless; in public life, his course found thorough approval until the date of the Stamp Act. It was easy enough in those days for a man to take the government rather than the popular side. The lengths to which the patriot leaders presently went seemed to Hutchinson improper and disastrous, and as the controversy grew bitter, he was forced into positions which, probably, he would not have taken in a calmer time. Generally, in his championship of the Tory cause, he showed a courage, ability, and persistency quite admirable. He hoped, no doubt, for advancement for himself and his sons, stood in some awe, natural enough in a colonist, before the king and English nobles, came to feel personal hatred for the men who opposed him, so that he could no more do them justice than they him. These were human limitations; his battle had much manfulness. When afterwards he went to England, and after a few homesick years died at last a forlorn exile,

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[1] Drake's Boston, p. 723.

[2] Botta, Hist. of War of Independ., I, 112.

[3] Manuscript letter, Nov. 13, 1773, Mass. Archives.

mortified and disappointed, he left in America the reputation of having been the evil genius of his country. A candid student, brushing aside prejudices, is forced to regard Hutchinson as one of the most unfortunate characters of our history, and feel that there is much pathos in his story.[1]

We must now bring upon our stage quite a different figure. The splendid Otis, whose leadership was at first unquestioned, who had only to enter Boston town-meeting to call forth shouts and clapping of hands, and who had equal authority in the Assembly, as early as 1770, was fast sinking into insanity. In spite of fits of unreasonable violence and absurd folly, vacillations between extremes of subserviency and audacious resistance, his influence with the people long remained. He was like the huge cannon on the man-of-war, in Victor Hugo's story, that had broken from its moorings in the storm, and become a terror to those whom it formerly defended. He was indeed a great gun, from whom in the time of the Stamp Act had been sent the most powerful bolts against unconstitutional oppression. With lashings parted, however, as the storm grew violent, he plunged dangerously from side to side, almost sinking the ship, all the more an object of dread from the calibre that had once made him so serviceable. It was a melancholy sight, and yet a great relief, when his friends saw him at last bound hand and foot, and carried into retirement.

But New England had been prolific of children fitted for the time. There were John Scollay, Benjamin Kent, William Molineux, William Phillips, John Pitts, Paul Revere, —plain citizens, merchants, mechanics, selectmen of the town,

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[1] As this monograph is in press, appears "The Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson," a selection from his unpublished manuscripts, edited by his great-grandson. The book is full of interesting materials, and will cause a new estimate to be put upon the character and career of the unfortunate governor. We are, perhaps, in danger of running to the other extreme. See "Governor Thomas Hutchinson," by George E. Ellis, in *Atlantic*, for May, 1884.

deacons in the churches, cool heads, well-to-do, persistent, courageous, sturdy wheel-horses for the occasion. Of a higher order were the wise and faithful James Bowdoin, the able Joseph Hawley of Northampton, young men like John Hancock, Josiah Quincy, Joseph Warren, John Adams, men of wealth or spirited ability, who had, like Otis, some of them, a gift of eloquence to set hearts on fire, some of them executive power, some of them cunning to lay trains and supply the flash in proper time. It was a wonderful group. But Bowdoin was sometimes inert; Hawley was unreliable through a strange moodiness; Hancock hampered by foibles that sometimes quite cancelled his merits; Quincy, who died when scarcely past his youth, like a youth was sometimes fickle, ready to temporize when to falter was destruction; again in unwise fervor counselling assassination as a proper expedient. Warren, too, could rush into extremes of ferocity, wishing he might wade to the knees in blood; while John Adams showed only an intermittent zeal in the public cause until all the preliminary work was done.

There was need of a man in this group, of sufficient ascendency through intellect and character to win deference from all—wise enough to see always the supreme end, what each instrument was fit for, and to bring all forces to bear in the right way—a man of consummate tact, to sail in torpedo-sown waters without an explosion, though conducting wires of local prejudice, class-sensitiveness, and personal foible on every hand, led straight down to magazines of wrath which might shatter the cause in a moment,—a man of resources of his own to such an extent that he could supplement from himself what was wanting in others, always awake though others might want to sleep,—always at work though others might be tired,—a man devoted, without thought of personal gain or fame, simply and solely to the public cause. Such a man there was, and his name was Samuel Adams. His early career had not been promising. In private affairs he had quite failed of success, winning nothing for himself, and los-

ing the patrimony that had descended to him. In public affairs he had been for nine years a tax-collector, had failed to obtain the money, was largely in arrears, and had been in danger of prosecution. The town, however, knew that "Sam Adams'" deficiency was owing to hard times largely, which made the people slow of payment; if he had failed to press us as he might have done it was partly due to his humanity, partly to his absorption in other directions. He was a ruling spirit in the clubs and in town-meeting, a constant writer of political articles for the newspapers, a deep student of all books relating to the science of government. It was early known that when public documents requiring special care were needed in town or Assembly, "Sam Adams" had a fund of facts and ideas, and a knack of putting things, that made his help valuable. His poverty and reputation for business incapacity kept him back so that while much younger men became distinguished, it was not until he was forty-two that he came forward prominently. Then, in the year 1764, he was appointed by Boston town-meeting to prepare instructions for their newly-elected representatives. The year following Samuel Adams began, as a member of the Assembly, a career of public service almost uninterrupted, until in late old age his faculties became broken.

In character and career he was a singular combination of things incongruous. He was in religion the narrowest of Puritans, but in manner very genial. He was perfectly rigid in his opinions, but in his expression of them often very compliant. He was the most conservative of men, but was regarded as were the "abolition fanatics," in our time, before the emancipation proclamation. His uprightness was inflexible, yet a wilier fox than he in all matters of political manœuvering, our history does not show. He had in business no push or foresight, but in politics was a wonder of force and shrewdness. He expressed opinions, whose audacity would have brought him at once to the halter if he could have been seized, in a voice full of trembling.

Even in his young manhood, his hair had become grey and his hand shook as if with paralysis; but he lived to his eighty-second year, his work rarely interrupted by sickness, serving as governor of Massachusetts for several successive terms after he had passed his three score and ten, almost the last survivor among the great pre-revolutionary figures.

Bancroft has spoken of Samuel Adams as more than any other man, "the type and representative of the New England town-meeting."[1] Boston, as we have seen, is the largest community that ever maintained the town organization, probably the most generally able and intelligent. No other town ever played so conspicuous a part in connection with important events. It led Massachusetts, New England, the thirteen colonies, in the struggle for independence. Probably in the whole history of the Anglo-Saxon race, there has been no other so interesting manifestation of the activity of the Folk-mote. Of this town of towns, Samuel Adams was the son of sons. He was strangely identified with it always. He was trained in Boston schools and Harvard College. He never left the town except on the town's errands or those of the province of which it was the head. He had no private business after the first years of his manhood, was the public servant simply and solely in places large and small,—fire-ward, committee to see that chimneys were safe, tax-collector, moderator of town-meeting, representative, congressman, governor. One may almost call him the creature of the town-meeting. His development took place on the floor of Faneuil Hall and the Old South, from the time when he looked on as a wondering boy to the time when he stood there as the master figure; and such a master of the methods by which a town-meeting may be swayed, the world has never seen. On the best of terms with the people,—the workmen of the ship-yards, the distillers (he had himself tried to be a brewer), the merchants—he knew always precisely what springs to touch.

[1] In a private conversation with the writer; also Hist. of Const., II., 260.

He was the prince of canvassers, the very king of the caucus, of which his father was the inventor. He was not a great orator. Always clear-headed in the most confusing turmoil, he had ever at command a simple, convincing style of speech effective with plain men; and when a fire burned for which he could not trust himself, he could rely on the magnificent speech of Otis, or Quincy, or Warren, who poured their copious words, often quite unconscious that cunning "Sam Adams" really managed his men and was directing the stream. His ascendency was quite extraordinary and no less marked over men of ability than over ordinary minds. "Master of the Puppets," is one of the many expressions applied to him by Hutchinson to denote the completeness of his leadership.[1] As often Samuel Adams' followers did not know that they were being led, so, possibly, he failed himself to see, sometimes, that he was leading, believing himself to be the mere agent of the will of the great people which decided this way or that. At any rate, for the democracy of the town-meeting he never had any feeling but reverence. So far as his New Englanders were concerned "Vox populi" was always with him "Vox Dei." His first conspicuous act was to serve as a channel to that voice in 1764, instructing in behalf of the town the representatives; to that voice he was always ready himself to defer. In his old age, when he was hesitating whether or no to approve the Federal Constitution which he thought might remove, to a dangerous degree, the power from the people to a central authority, shrewd men knew how to manage the manager. A meeting of Boston mechanics was contrived, which endorsed the constitution; the result was made known to Samuel Adams by a committee of plain men with Paul Revere at their head, after which he hesitated no longer. While many of the best men of New England, after the peace, became Federalists, favoring sometimes the establishment of a monarchy and an order of nobility, Samuel Adams

[1] From manuscript letter, July 10, '73, in Mass. Archives.

stood sturdily for a democracy, perhaps too decentralized. He carried to an extreme his dislike of delegated power. When, in 1784, Boston, grown unwieldy, agitated the question of establishing a city-government, the people, instead of transacting their own affairs, committing them to the management of a mayor and representative councilmen, Samuel Adams, chairman of the town's committee to report on the defects of the town organization, reported that "there were no defects,"[1] and in his time there was no change.

We are accustomed to call Washington the "Father of his Country." It would be useless to dispute his right to the title; he and no other will bear it through all the ages. He established our country's freedom with the sword, then guided its course during the first critical years of its independent existence. No one can know the figure without feeling how real is its greatness. It is impossible to see how without Washington the nation could have ever been. But after all, is "Father of America" the best title for Washington? Where and what was Washington during those long preliminary years when the nation was shaping as the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child? A quiet planter, who in youth as a surveyor had come to know the woods, who in his young manhood had led bodies of provincials with some efficiency in certain unsuccessful military expeditions, who in maturity had sat, for the most part in silence, among his active colleagues in the House of Burgesses, with scarcely a suggestion to make in all the sharp debate while the new nation was shaping. There is another character in our history to whom was once given the title "Father of America"—a man to a large extent forgotten, his reputation overlaid by those who followed him,—no other than this man of the Town-meeting, Samuel Adams. As far as the *genesis* of America is concerned, Samuel Adams can more properly be called the "Father of our Country"

[1] Boston Town Records, Nov. 9, 1785.

than Washington. He is, at any rate, second only to Washington in the story of the Revolution.[1]

Those instructions to the Boston representatives in 1764, in which Samuel Adams spoke for the town, emerging then, at the age of forty-two, into the public life where he remained to the end, contain the first suggestion ever made in America for a meeting of the colonies, looking toward a resistance to British encroachments. From that paper came the "Stamp Act Congress." In the years which immediately followed, being at length in the Assembly, he soon rose to the leading position, superseding James Otis, who gradually sank under mental disease. While the cotemporaries of Samuel Adams rejoiced over the repeal of the Stamp Act, he saw in the declaration of Parliament by which it was accompanied, that it was competent to legislate for the colonies in all cases whatsoever, plain evidence that more trouble was in store, and was the most influential among the few who strove to prevent a disastrous supineness among the people. From this time forward the substantial authorship of almost every state paper of importance in Massachusetts can be traced to him. Very noticeably, he was the author of the "Circular Letter" in 1768,[2] by which the colonies in general were roused, and the way for union prepared. From that year on, he saw no satisfactory issue from the dispute but in the independence of America, and began to labor for it with all his energy. It had been a dream with many, indeed, that some time there was to be a great independent empire in this western world; but no public man saw so soon as Samuel Adams, that in the latter half of the eighteenth century the time for it had come,

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[1] "A man whom Plutarch, if he had only lived late enough, would have delighted to include in his gallery of worthies, a man who in the history of the American Revolution is second only to Washington, Samuel Adams." —John Fiske: (taken from his forthcoming "History of the American People" by kind permission of the author).

[2] Satisfactorily established in Wells' Life of S. Adams, I., 172.

and that to work for it was the duty of all patriots.[1] One might pass in review the great figures of our revolutionary epoch, one by one, and show that then, seven years before the declaration of independence, there was not a man except Samuel Adams, who looked forward to it and worked for it. The world generally had not conceived of the attainment of independence as a present possibility. Those who came to think it possible, like Franklin, Dickinson of Pennsylvania, and James Otis, shrunk from the idea as involving calamity, and only tried to secure a better regulated dependence. As late as 1775, the idea of separation, according to Jefferson, had "never yet entered into any person's mind."[2] It was well-known, however, in Massachusetts what were the opinions of Samuel Adams. He was isolated even in the group that most closely surrounded him. Even so trusty a follower and attached a friend as Joseph Warren could not stand with him here. What Garrison was to the abolition of slavery, was Samuel Adams to independence,—a man looked on with the greatest dread as an extremist and fanatic by many of those who afterwards fought for freedom, down almost to that very day, July 4th, 1776, when largely through his skilful and tireless management, as he worked

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[1] July 1st, 1774, Hutchinson, having just reached London, was hurried by Lord Dartmouth into the presence of the king without being allowed time to change his clothes after the voyage. A conversation of two hours took place, the king showing the utmost eagerness to find out the truth as to America. While answering the king's inquiries concerning the popular leaders, Hutchinson remarked that Samuel Adams was regarded "as the opposer of Government and a sort of Wilkes in New England.

"*King:* What gives him his importance?

"*Hutchinson:* A great pretended zeal for liberty and a most inflexible natural temper. He was the first that publicly asserted the independency of the colonies upon the kingdom." Diary and Letters of Thos. Hutchinson, p. 167.

The testimony of Hutchinson is often referred to, because, as a man of judgment, himself in the thick of the fight, and in relations of bitter hostility to Samuel Adams, his evidence as to Samuel Adams' importance has a special value.

[2] Cooke's Virginia: p. 375.

the wires in his subtle way, the Congress which he had had so large an influence in bringing into being, came at last to stand upon his ground.

In public documents which he drafted, indeed, he distinctly and repeatedly disclaimed all thought of a severance, and was loudly charged by Hutchinson and others with shameful duplicity, since his private utterances were often of a different tenor. If he had cared to defend his consistency, he would have declared, no doubt, that when he was acting simply as the mouth-piece of a body, few or none of whom had reached his position, he must use other language than when speaking for himself. Such a defence is not altogether satisfactory. It is a still harder task to justify the conduct of the group of which he was the controlling mind, in the matter of the famous letters which were sent from England to America, by Franklin, then the Massachusetts agent, in 1773. The letters were private, written by men in high position in the Province to English friends, and were obtained by Franklin in a way only recently explained.[1] They were sent to America on the express condition that no copies were to be made; this, however, was evaded by the leaders, who finally published them broadcast, but not until the public mind had been prepared in a way which was certainly marvellously artful. The letters of Hutchinson in the collection are mild enough in their temper, and certainly not out of harmony with his well-known views. They were made, however, to produce against him the strongest possible resentment. Aggravated horror over their contents was expressed before their publication, to affect the public view. Some sentences were falsely construed, others garbled and disjointed. Hutchinson declares his letters are the most innocent things in the world, "but if it had been 'Chevy Chace,' the leaders are so adroit they would have made the people believe it was full of evil and treason."[2]

[1] See Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc., Feb. and March, 1878.

[2] Manuscript letter in Mass. Archives, July 10, 1773.

Samuel Adams' complicity in the affair is quite certain, and it is hard to reconcile the thing with any principle of fair dealing. The whole transaction has a questionable color, and though patriotic historians and biographers have been able to see nothing in it, except, so to speak, a dove-like iridescence, an unprejudiced judge will detect the scaly gleam of a creature in better repute for wisdom than for harmlessness. The fact was, Hutchinson and Samuel Adams were such thoroughly good haters of one another that Dr. Johnson might have folded them both to his burly breast in an ecstasy. By some casuistry or other, the Puritan politician, upright though he was, made crooked treatment of his Tory *bête noir* square with his sense of right. He would fight the devil with fire, rather than run any risks.

"His chief dependence," wrote Hutchinson, "is upon Boston town-meeting, where he originates the measures which are followed by the rest of the towns, and, of course, are adopted or justified by the Assembly." It will be interesting to look at two or three of these town-meetings, illustrating, as they do so clearly, the methods and character of the man. The first days of March, 1770, are very memorable in the history of the Town-meeting. The snow in King street lay stained with the blood of Boston people, shed by soldiers of the 29th regiment. "The troops must go!" said the town. "They shall stay!" said King George, through his deputies, and the question was, which side should yield. Hutchinson, chief-magistrate, had shown the best nerve and judgment at the time of the 'Massacre,' by calm words from the east balcony of the Old State House, averting a bloody battle, even when the alarm-bells were summoning the frantic citizens, and on the other side, the soldiers were kneeling in their ranks ready for street firing. Out of the tumult the usual quiet and decorum were appearing. The selectmen had drawn up the warrant, which the constables of the different wards had posted in due form. The Folk-mote, swelling beyond the dimensions of Faneuil Hall, had flowed over to the Old

South, the path of the crowd thitherward crossing the blood-stains where the victims had weltered; now, in the meeting-house and the street outside, they waited sullenly but in order.

In the council-chamber in the Old State House, Hutchinson, surrounded by his twenty-eight councillors and the commanders of the troops and the fleet, the former in wigs and scarlet robes of office, the latter in uniform, looked out on the crowd as they passed by to the Old South, and recalled the way in which, in the preceding century, the town had handled Sir Edmund Andros. The imposing portraits of Charles II. and James II. from the wall seemed to shed an influence upon the company to make them strong in maintaining the royal prerogative.

On the people's side, the central figure, as always in those days, is Samuel Adams. Not at all that he is the most conspicuous; he is neither selectman nor moderator; he is not chairman of the committee which the town appoints to bear its message to the lieutenant-governor. As is generally the case, others are in the foreground, while matters rest upon him. All is in order according to the time-consecrated Anglo-Saxon traditions. Samuel Adams has addressed the people in his direct, earnest way, and now, as a simple member of the committee, behind Hancock, the elegant chairman, he goes with the rest to demand of Hutchinson the removal of the troops. The crisis has come: now, in the moment of collision, the gilded figure-head is taken in out of danger, and "a wedge of steel"[1] is thrust out to bear the brunt of the impact. As spokesman of the town, Samuel Adams demands the removal of the troops. Hutchinson is not a coward. Though it is declared that authority to remove the troops rests only with

[1] Excellent John Adams found the legitimate resources of rhetoric quite inadequate for the expression of his admiration for his kinsman. "He was," he says, "the wedge of steel which split the knot of *lignum vitae* that tied America to England."

Gage at New York, the ranking officer, Dalrymple, agrees that the 29th regiment shall go down the harbor to the Castle; the 14th, however, must remain. The committee is given to understand that this answer must end the matter, and with it they return to the town-meeting. They go forth from the south door of the Old State House, Samuel Adams the soul of the group. Though the March air is keen, he bares his head; he is but 48, but his hair is already grey, and a tremor of the head and hands helps to give his figure as he walks a certain venerableness. "Both regiments or none!" "Both regiments or none!" he is heard to say to the men on this side and that, as the crowd in the street press back to make a lane by which the committee can pass. When presently, before the moderator, the reply of Hutchinson is reported, the significance of the words spoken to the crowd appears. "Both regiments or none!" from the right; "Both regiments or none!" from the left. The town has caught from the "Chief Incendiary" the watch-word; it is uttered by every voice. It is formally voted that both regiments must go, and Samuel Adams, with his supporting group, is presently once more in the council-chamber to speak the peremptory message. There is hurried consultation, attempt at evasion, a plea of powerlessness to execute the popular requirement. But focussed in the dark blue eye of Samuel Adams is the determination of all the freemen of the Province. The responsibility is forced upon the magistrate which he seeks to avoid. The promise is wrung from the unwilling lips that both regiments shall forthwith go, to be known in history henceforth as the "Sam Adams regiments;" and so, under the master's guidance, the whole power of the king, as was said at the time in England, was successfully bullied. It is rarely enough that one can find any trace of boastfulness in the words of Samuel Adams, but writing of the encounter with Hutchinson to Warren, in the following year, there is a touch of exultation in the words: "If fancy deceived me not,

I observed his knees to tremble. I thought I saw his face grow pale, and I enjoyed the sight."[1]

Less dramatic, but far more memorable than his management of the expulsion of the regiments, was the banding together of the Massachusetts towns through Samuel Adams, by means of the "Committees of Correspondence." This was his almost unaided work,[2] and no act of his career shows to better advantage his far-seeing statesmanship. The most clear-sighted of the Tories failed entirely to detect the portent of the scheme until it was accomplished; while of the patriots, scarcely one of prominence stood by Samuel Adams, in bringing the measure to pass, or took part cordially, until a late period, in carrying out the plan. Three weeks passed before he could procure a town-meeting for the initiation of his idea, during which three petitions signed by freeholders were presented. On November 2, 1772, at length Samuel Adams vanquished the sluggishness of his friends. The town-meeting in which the matter came to vote was small; the measure was earnestly debated, not coming to a decision until late at night. Characteristically, Samuel Adams took for himself a second place on the Committee, giving the chairmanship to James Otis, who now in a short interval of sanity, rendered his last service to the community of which he had been the idol. Samuel Adams was appointed to draft a statement of the rights of the colonists "as men, as christians, and as subjects;" Joseph Warren, who was fast rising to the position of his ablest and trustiest lieutenant, drew up a "List of Grievances;" and Dr. Benjamin Church, a man who began brilliantly and usefully, but made a traitor's end, prepared a letter to the towns. Samuel Adams' statement is substantially an anticipation of the Declaration of Independence.

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[1] Hutchinson attributes the result to the weakness of Col. Dalrymple. "He brought it all upon himself by his offer to remove one of the regiments." Diary and Letters, p. 80.

[2] Settled satisfactorily in Wells' Life of S. Adams, I., 509.

In the last days of 1772, the document, having been printed, was transmitted to those for whom it had been intended, producing at once an immense effect. The towns almost unanimously appointed similar committees; from every quarter came replies in which the sentiments of Samuel Adams were echoed. In the library of Bancroft is a volume of manuscripts worn and stained by time which have an interest scarcely inferior to that possessed by the "Declaration of Independence" itself, as the fading page hangs against its pillar in the library of the State Department at Washington. They are the original replies sent by the Massachusetts towns to Samuel Adams' Committee sitting in Faneuil Hall, during those first months of 1773. One may well read them with bated breath, for it is the touch of the elbow as the stout little democracies dress up into line, just before they plunge in at Concord and Bunker-Hill. There is sometimes a noble scorn of the restraints of orthography, as of the despotism of Great Britain, in the work of the old town clerks, for they generally were secretaries of the committees; and once in a while a touch of Dogberry's quaintness, as the punctilious officials, though not always "putting God first," yet take pains that there shall be no mistake as to their piety, by making every letter in the name of the Deity a rounded capital; yet the documents ought to inspire the deepest reverence. It is the highest mark the town-meeting has ever touched. Never before and never since have Anglo-Saxon men, in lawful Folk-mote assembled, given utterance to thoughts and feelings so fine in themselves and so pregnant with great events. To each letter stand affixed the names of the committee in autograph. This awkward scrawl was made by the rough fist of a Cape Ann fisherman, on shore for the day to do at town-meeting the duty his fellows had laid upon him; the hand that wrote this was cramped from the scythe-handle, as its possessor mowed an intervale on the Connecticut; this blotted signature where smutted fingers have left a black stain was written by a blacksmith of Mid-

dlesex, turning aside a moment from forging a barrel that was to do duty at Lexington. They were men of the plainest; but as the documents, containing statements of the most generous principles and the most courageous determination, were read in the town-houses, the committees who produced them and the constituents for whom they stood were lifted above the ordinary level. Their horizon expanded to the broadest; they had in view not simply themselves, but the welfare of the continent; not solely their own generation but remote posterity. It was Samuel Adams' own plan, the consequences of which no one foresaw, neither friend nor foe, but in January the eyes of men were opening. One of the ablest of the Tories wrote:[1] "This is the foulest, subtlest, and most venomous serpent ever issued from the egg of sedition. I saw the small seed when it was implanted; it was a grain of mustard. I have watched the plant until it has become a great tree." It was the transformation into a strong cord of what had been a rope of sand.

As to intercolonial committees of correspondence, the initiative in their formation was taken soon afterwards by Virginia, Dabney Carr making the motion to that effect in the House of Burgesses. Whether the suggestion of the measure came from the Massachusetts patriots is a matter which has been much disputed. It was so believed in Boston.[2] The measure was only a carrying out of the general policy first marked out by Samuel Adams in the "Instructions" of 1764, and the "Circular Letter" of 1768. In Bancroft's collection is contained an autograph letter of Samuel Adams written to the Virginian, Arthur Lee, then in London, September 27, 1771, in which it is suggested that societies of correspondence shall be formed in different colonies with even a larger purpose than that of banding the colonies together. The suggestion is that they shall correspond with the "Society for the

[1] Daniel Leonard.

[2] Hutchinson: Manuscript letter in Mass. Archives, Apr. 19, 1773.

Maintenance of the Bill of Rights" in England, and so bring America into union with those in the mother-country, who were resisting the encroachments of the Prerogative. "This is a sudden thought," he writes, "and drops undigested from my pen. It would be an arduous task for any man to attempt to awaken a sufficient number in the colonies to so grand an undertaking. Nothing, however, should be despaired of."[1] Whether the Virginia patriots proceeded on their own motion or incited from elsewhere it is certain that Samuel Adams had regarded the banding together of the Massachusetts towns only as preliminary to uniting by similar means the thirteen colonies. The train was laid for it all, though the execution of the purpose was delayed in the Massachusetts Assembly by certain important events. It was greatly to the joy of Massachusetts that Virginia anticipated her. South and North must present an unbroken front. Virginia went forward and Massachusetts was at once at her side.

As the struggle deepens the prominence of Samuel Adams becomes more marked. In the Assembly, he carries the American cause upon his shoulders, often almost alone; but the town-meeting is his favorite sphere. There he is hardly less than supreme, and his most effective work finds its basis there. When Hutchinson calls him "Master of the Puppets," one feels that the language is extravagant. Other expressions, however, with which the letters of Hutchinson abound, the "All in All," the "Instar Omnium," the "Chief Incendiary," are scarcely less strong, and the expressions of those who loved him are as marked as those of the men who regarded him with hatred and terror. Generally it is as the manager somewhat withdrawn behind the figures that stand in the foreground that he is making himself felt. On that December night in 1773, when the town-meeting in the Old South, by the dim light of candles, wait for the return of Benjamin

[1] Copied from the manuscript.

Rotch, owner of the tea-ship "Dartmouth," from Milton, and even Josiah Quincy advises a temporizing course rather than decided action, Samuel Adams sits in the pulpit as Moderator. When presently the merchant enters and announces the governor's refusal to grant a pass to the ship, the words of the Moderator are: "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country!" A war-whoop is heard from near the door; the Mohawks rush, with the crowd at their heels, to Griffin's wharf, and presently through the stillness is heard the crash of the hatchets as the chests are broken in upon the decks of the vessel. Samuel Adams is not in the company, but his sentence from the chair was evidently the concerted signal for which all were waiting. Again, at the last great town-meeting before Lexington and Concord, March 6th, 1775, the fifth celebration of the Boston Massacre, while Warren is the heroic central figure, Samuel Adams is behind all as chief director. On that day Gage had in the town eleven regiments. Of trained soldiers there were scarcely fewer than the number of men on the patriot side; and when we remember that many Tories throughout the Province, in the disturbed times, had sought refuge in Boston, under the protection of the troops, we can feel what a host there was that day on the side of the King. Nevertheless, all went forward as usual. The warrant appeared in due form for the meeting, at which an oration was to be delivered to commemorate the "horrid massacre," and to denounce the "ruinous tendency of standing armies being placed in free and populous cities in time of peace." The Old South was densely thronged, and in the pulpit as Moderator once more, by the side of the town-clerk, William Cooper, quietly sat Samuel Adams. Among the citizens a large party of officers were present, intent, apparently, upon making a disturbance with the design of precipitating a conflict. The war, it was thought, might as well begin then as at any time. Warren was late in appearing; Samuel Adams sat meantime as if upon a powder-barrel that might at any minute roar into the air in a sudden explosion. The tradition

has come down that he was serene and unmoved. He quietly requested the townsmen to vacate the front seats into which he politely invited the soldiers, that they might be well placed to hear. The numbers were so large that they overflowed the pews and many sat upon the pulpit stairs. Warren came at last, entering through the window behind the pulpit to avoid the press, and at once began. A picturesque incident in the delivery of the oration was that, as Warren proceeded, a British captain, sitting on the pulpit stairs, held up in his open palm before Warren's face a number of pistol bullets. Warren quietly dropped his handkerchief upon them and went on. It was strange enough that that oration was given without an outbreak. "We wildly stare about," he says, "and with amazement ask 'Who spread this ruin around us?' What wretch has dared deface the image of his God? Has haughty France or cruel Spain sent forth her myrmidons? Has the grim savage rushed again from the far distant wilderness? Or does some fiend, fierce from the depth of Hell, with all the rancorous malice which the apostate damned can feel, twang her destructive bow and hurl her deadly arrows at our breast? No, none of these; but how astonishing! It is the hand of Britain that inflicts the wound. The arms of George, our rightful King, have been employed to shed that blood, which freely should have flowed at his command, when justice, or the honor of his crown had called his subjects to the field."[1] The oration was given without disturbance, though the tension was tremendous. In the proceedings that followed, the quiet was not perfect, but the collision was averted for a time. The troops were not quite ready, and on the patriot side the presiding genius was as prudent as he was bold.[2]

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[1] Frothingham's Warren, p. 433.

[2] Hutchinson gives a new and interesting story respecting this memorable town-meeting, in his Diary. "September 6, 1775, Col. James tells an odd story of the intention of the officers the 5 March, that 300 were in the meeting to hear Dr. Warren's oration: that if he had said anything against the King, &c., an officer was prepared, who stood near, with an egg, to have

Shortly after he sent the following quiet account to Richard Henry Lee in Virginia:

BOSTON, March, 1775.

On the sixth Instant, there was an Adjournment of our Town-meeting, when an Oration was delivered in Commemoration of the Massacre on the 5th of March, 1770. I had long expected they would take that occasion to beat up a Breeze, and therefore (having the Honor of being the Moderator of the Meeting, and seeing Many of the Officers present before the orator came in) I took care to have them treated with Civility, inviting them into convenient Seats, &c., that they might have no pretence to behave ill, for it is a good Maxim in Politicks as well as War, to put and keep the enemy in the wrong. They behaved tolerably well till the oration was finished, when upon a motion made for the appointment of another orator, they began to hiss, which irritated the assembly to the greatest Degree and Confusion ensued. They, however, did not gain their End, which was apparently to break up the Meeting, for order was soon restored, and we proceeded regularly and finished. I am persuaded that were it not for the Danger of precipitating a Crisis, not a Man of them would have been spared. It was provoking enough to them, that while there were so many Troops stationed here for the design of suppressing Town-meetings, there should yet be a Meeting for the purpose of

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thrown in his face, and that was to have been a signal to draw swords, and they would have massacred Hancock, Adams, and hundreds more; and he added he wished they had. I am glad they did not: for I think it would have been an everlasting disgrace to attack a body of people without arms to defend themselves.

"He says one officer cried 'Fy! Fy!' and Adams immediately asked who dared say so? And then said to the officer he should mark him. The officer answered 'And I will mark you. I live at such a place, and shall be ready to meet you.' Adams said he would go to his General. The officer said his General had nothing to do with it; the affair was between them two." Diary and Letters, pp. 528–529.

delivering an oration to commemorate a Massacre perpetrated by Soldiers, and to show the Danger of standing Armies.

SAMUEL ADAMS.[1]

It was but a few weeks now to the 19th of April, when Samuel Adams, flying with Hancock across the fields from Lexington to Woburn, exclaimed: "What a glorious morning is this!" On the 12th of June came Gage's proclamation, offering full pardon to every soul in America on condition of submission, "excepting only from the Benefit of such Pardon Samuel Adams and John Hancock, whose Offences are of too flagitious a Nature to admit of any other Consideration than that of condign Punishment."[2]

Samuel Adams, as a member of Congress, now enters upon a career, which takes him from the scene of his early activity. Both friends and enemies testify to the weight of his influence in the new sphere. According to Galloway, the able Pennsylvanian, who so much embarrassed the action of the first Congress, and afterwards stood strong on the royal side: "It was this man who, by his superior application, managed at once the faction in Congress at Philadelphia, and the faction in New England;" and Jefferson wrote: "I always considered him more than any other man the *fountain* of our important measures." Yet he never attained before the nation the position which he had held in his own province and town. While his younger kinsman, John Adams, rapidly rose to eminence, he remained less distinguished in the body of delegates, which, as the war proceeded, gradually sank lower and lower in the estimation of the country. Possibly his abilities were better adapted to the arena of the Folk-mote than to that of a great representative body. Certainly his principles were such as to lead to embarrassment in the management of large affairs. His excessive dislike of delegated power, for instance, led

[1] Copied from the manuscript in Bancroft's collection.

[2] From Mr. Bancroft's copy of the Proclamation.

him to oppose the establishment of departments presided over by secretaries, and made him prefer, as the executive machinery of government, the more awkward form of committees. He set himself against a foreign office; against a department of War, to be presided over by Gen. Sullivan; greatest mistake of all, against a bureau of Finance, with Robert Morris as the secretary.

With the close of the war, Samuel Adams was consigned to poverty and comparative obscurity. Age was fast coming upon him; an estrangement with Hancock, whose star was in the ascendant, helped to throw him into the background; the tendency toward aristocratic forms and a government strongly centralized, which, after the rebellion of Shays, became very marked in Massachusetts, brought into disrepute the great arch-democrat. Yet Samuel Adams was rarely unreasonable in his advocacy. In the dismal time of the Shays trouble he stood stoutly for law and order against the vast popular conspiracy. The insurgents had powerful backing and the means employed were not greatly different from those used before the war against British aggression. "Now that we have regular and constitutional government," said Samuel Adams, "popular committees and county conventions are not only useless but dangerous. They served an excellent purpose and were highly necessary when they were set up, and I shall not repent the small share I then took in them." He declared for the sternest measures in support of the laws. At the head of Boston town-meeting, which he guided in the old way as Moderator, and whose spokesman he became in the crisis, he strengthened the hands of his noble old colleague Bowdoin, now become Governor, in the most decisive course. "In monarchies the crime of treason and rebellion may admit of being pardoned or lightly punished; but the man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death."

In the matter of the adoption of the Federal Constitution, his position was not at all that of Patrick Henry and Richard

Henry Lee, who opposed it with all their power. He received it hesitatingly, and suggested amendments looking toward a diminution of what he felt to be a dangerous tendency toward centralization. He never, however, set himself against it; indeed, it was only through his influence that Massachusetts was at length induced to adopt it.[1]

The neglect and obloquy of which the old man had become the subject were pitiful. There is still in existence the note, written in a rude hand upon common paper, the letters run together while lying upon the wet grass of his garden into which it had been thrown, in which Samuel Adams is warned to expect assassination. He remained, indeed, the public servant, but in positions comparatively inconspicuous, while men, whose fortunes he had made, were in the places of honor. But before it was too late, the whirligig of time had begun to bring in its revenges. A strong effort was made to send him once more to Congress, as the administration of Washington began under the just-adopted Constitution. The effort was unsuccessful, but the canvass awoke the hearts of the people to a better appreciation of their well-tried servant. To the man of to-day, such a conjunction as the setting side by side of the names of Washington and Samuel Adams seems little less than ludicrous. It was not absurd in those days. Say the writers: "While we are careful to introduce to our Federal Legislature the American Fabius, let us not be unmindful of the American Cato." He became lieutenant-governor, and, in 1793, governor, a post which he occupied through successive re-elections until 1797, when he retired from public service at the age of 75. Could he have lived another life, a brilliant recognition would probably have fallen to him. The forces

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[1] Bancroft: Hist. of Constitution, II., 261.

In a private letter to the writer, Mr. Bancroft says: "Point out the error that many have made in saying that he was at first opposed to the Constitution. He never was opposed to the Constitution; he only waited to make up his mind."

of Federalism were growing exhausted; the incoming wave of "Democracy" would certainly have lifted him into a place of power. Already in 1796, Virginia cast for him in the Electoral College fifteen votes for the Presidency, putting him next to Jefferson, to whom she gave twenty; and, in 1801, when at length the change had come, Jefferson, just elected, wrote to the octogenarian: "How much I lament that time has deprived me of your aid! It would have been a day of glory which should have called you to the first office of my administration. But give us your counsel, my friend, and give us your blessing; and be assured that there exists not in the heart of man a more faithful esteem than mine to you."[1]

Only once in his old age did the uncompromising Puritan so far forget himself as to fall into an inconsistency. As governor, he felt that his function was simply executive, to carry out the will of the people and their representatives in the legislature, and that it was a usurpation for such a magistrate to interpose his veto to thwart their action or in any other way to proceed independently. But efforts were made to open a theatre in Boston! The legislature passed an act prohibiting it, upon which the people in town-meeting demanded its repeal. This the old man fought on the floor of Faneuil Hall, till his voice was drowned in a roar of opposition. The demand for repeal was made to which the legislature listened. But the stout Independent whose strictness was only to be matched by the toughest of the covenanters or the most unbending of the Ironsides, in his gubernatorial capacity vetoed the repeal. The Puritan and the politician for once were in conflict, and the Puritan carried the day. For himself he indulged in no amusement but psalm-singing; his dear Boston he would have a "Christian Sparta," similarly limited in its recreations; to save the town from going to the dogs, any sacrifice could be made.

[1] From the manuscript in Bancroft's Collection.

He was narrow, over subtle, perhaps, in the expedients which he sometimes employed, slow in recognizing the ways through which, in a vast republic like ours, all large affairs must be administered. But America has had few public men as devoted and, on the whole, as wise as he. From first to last, one can detect in him no thought of personal gain or fame. He was so poor, that when he went to the First Continental Congress in 1774, his friends were obliged to buy him clothes that he might make a respectable appearance. His wife sometimes supported the family, while he worked for the town or state. He lived in his latter years in the confiscated house of a Tory which was given him rent-free as an offset to claims he had for public service. It would have been necessary at last to support and bury him at the public charge, had he not inherited from his only son, an army surgeon who died at 37, claims against the government which yielded about six thousand dollars. This sum, fortunately invested, sufficed for the simple wants of himself and his faithful wife. As careless was he in regard to his position before his cotemporaries and in history. Time and again the credit for great measures which he originated was given to men who were simply his agents, and there was never a remonstrance from him; time and again men whom he brought forward from obscurity, to set here or there, with scarcely more volition of their own than so many chess-men, stood in an eminence before the world which is not yet lost, obscuring the real master. Papers which would have established his title to a position among the greatest, he destroyed by his own hand or left at hap-hazard. He died October 2, 1803. Political rancor pursued him to the last. There was embarrassment in procuring a suitable escort for the funeral; the legislature of Massachusetts did him scant honor; even to-day his grave in the Granary burying-ground, in the heart of the town that he so much loved, is marked slightly, if at all.

The Town-Meeting To-day.

Though the Town-meeting of the New England of to-day rarely presents all the features of the Town-meeting of the Revolution, yet wherever the population has remained tolerably pure from foreign admixture, and wherever the numbers at the same time have not become so large as to embarrass, the institution retains much of its old vigor. The writer recalls the life, as it was twenty-five years ago, of a most venerable and uncontaminated old town, whose origin dates back more than two hundred years. At first it realized almost perfectly the idea of the Teutonic "tun." For long it was the frontier settlement, with nothing to the west but woods until the fierce Mohawks were reached, and nothing but woods to the north until one came to the hostile French of Canada. About the houses, therefore, was drawn the protection of a palisade to enclose them (*tynan*) against attack. Though not without some foreign intermixture, the old stock was, twenty-five years ago, so far unchanged that in the various "deestricks" the dialect was often unmistakeably nasal; the very bob-o-links in the meadow-grass, and the bumble-bees in the holly-hocks might have been imagined to chitter and hum with a Yankee twang; and "Zekle" squired "Huldy," as of yore, to singing-school or apple-paring, to quilting or sugaring-off, as each season brought its appropriate festival. The same names stood for the most part on tax, voting, and parish lists that stood there in the time of Philip's war, when for a space the people were driven out by the Indian pressure; and the fathers had handed down to the modern day, with their names and blood, the venerable methods by which they regulated their lives. On the northern boundary a factory village had sprung up about a water-power; at the south, too, five miles off there was some rattle of mills and sound of hammers. For the most part, however, the people were farmers, like their ancestors, reaping great hay-crops in June with which to fat in the stall long

rows of sleek cattle for market in December; or by farmer's alchemy, transmuting the clover of the rocky hills into golden butter.

From far and near, on the first March-Monday, the men gathered to the central village, whose people made great preparations for the entertainment of the people of the outskirts. What old Yankee, wherever he may have strayed, will not remember the "town-meeting ginger-bread," and the great roasts that smoked hospitably for all comers! The sheds of the meeting-house close by were crowded with horses and sleighs; for, in the intermediate slush, between ice and the spring mud, the runner was likely to be better than the wheel. The floor of the town-hall grew wet and heavy in the trampling; not in England alone is the land represented; a full representation of the soil comes to a New England town-meeting,—on the boots of the freemen. On a platform at the end of the plain room sat the five selectmen in a row,—at their left the venerable town-clerk, with the ample volume of records before him. His memory went back to the men who were old in Washington's administration, who in their turn remembered men in whose childhood the French and Indians burned the infant settlement. Three lives, the town-clerk's the third, spanned the whole history of the town. He was full of traditions, precedents, minutiae of town history, an authority in all disputed points of procedure from whom there was no appeal. In front of the row of selectmen with their brown, solid farmer faces, stood the Moderator, a vigorous man in the forties, six straight feet in height, colonel of the county regiment of militia, of a term's experience in the General Court, thus conversant with parliamentary law, a quick and energetic presiding officer.

It was indeed an arena. The south village was growing faster than the "Street," and there were rumors of efforts to be made to move the town-hall from its old place, which aroused great wrath; and both south village and "Street" took it hard that part of the men of the districts to the

north, had favored a proposition to be set off to an adjoining town. The weak side of human nature came out as well as the strong in the numerous jealousies and bickerings. Following the carefully arranged programme or warrant, from which there could be no departure, because ample warning must be given of every measure proposed, item after item was considered,—a change here in the course of the highway to the shire town, how much should be raised by taxes, the apportionment of money among the school districts, what bounty the town would pay its quota of troops for the war, a new wing for the poor-house, whether there should be a bridge at the west ford. Now and then came a touch of humor, as when the young husbands, married within the year, were elected field-drivers, officers taking the place of the ancient hog-reeves. Once the Moderator for the time-being displeased the meeting by his ruling as regards certain points of order. "Mr. Moderator," cried out an ancient citizen with a twang in his voice like that of a well-played jews-harp, "ef it's in awrder, I'd jest like to inquire the price of cawn at Cheapside." Another rustic Cicero whom for some reason the physicians of the village had displeased, once filled up a lull in proceedings with: "Mr. Moderator, I move that a dwelling be erected in the centre of the grave-yard in which the doctors of the town be required to reside, that they may have always under their eyes the fruits of their labors."

The talkers were sometimes fluent, sometimes stumbling and awkward. The richest man in the town, at the same time town-treasurer, was usually a silent looker-on. His son, however, president of the county agricultural society, an enterprising farmer, whose team was the handsomest, whose oxen the fattest, whose crops the heaviest, was in speech forceful and eloquent, with an energetic word to say on every question. But he was scarcely more prominent in the discussions than a poor broom-corn raiser, whose tax was only a few dollars. There was the intrigue of certain free-thinkers to oust the ministers from the school-committee,—the manœuvring of the factions to get hold of the German

colony, a body of immigrants lately imported into the factory-village to the north. These sat in a solid mass to one side while the proceedings went on in an unknown tongue, without previous training for such work, voting this way or that according to the direction of two or three leaders.

Watching it all, one could see how perfect a democracy it was. Things were often done far enough from the best way. Unwise or doubtful men were put in office, important projects stinted by niggardly appropriations, unworthy prejudices allowed to interfere with wise enterprises. Yet in the main the result was good. This was especially to be noted,—how thoroughly the public spirit of those who took part was stimulated, and how well they were trained to self-reliance, intelligence of various kinds, and love for freedom. The rough blacksmith or shoemaker, who had his say as to what should be the restriction about the keeping of dogs, or the pasturing of sheep on the western hills, spoke his mind in homely fashion enough, and possibly recommended some course not the wisest. That he could do so, however, helped his self-respect, caused him to take a deeper interest in affairs beyond himself, than if things were managed without a right on his part to interfere; and this gain in self-respect, public spirit, self-reliance, to the blacksmith and shoemaker is worth far more than a mere smooth or cheap carrying-on of affairs.

Is there anything more valuable among Anglo-Saxon institutions than this same ancient Folk-mote, this old-fashioned New England Town-meeting? What a list of important men can be cited who have declared in the strongest terms that tongue can utter their conviction of its preciousness![1] It

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[1] John Stuart Mill: Representative Government, p. 64, etc. De Tocqueville: De la Démocratie en Amérique, I. p. 96, etc. J. Toulmin Smith: Local Self-Government and Centralization, p. 29, etc. May: Constitutional History of England, II. 460. Bluntschli: quoted by H. B. Adams, Germanic Origin of N. E. Towns. Jefferson: to Kercheval, July 12, 1816, and to Cabell, Feb. 2, 1816. John Adams: Letter to his Wife, Oct. 29, 1775. Samuel Adams: Letter to Noah Webster, April 30, 1784. R. W. Emerson: Concord Bicentennial Discourse, 1835, etc., etc.

has been alleged that to this more than anything else was due the supremacy of England in America, the successful colonization out of which grew at last the United States. France failed precisely for want of this.[1] England prevailed precisely because "nations which are accustomed to township institutions and municipal goverment are better able than any other to found prosperous colonies. The habit of thinking and governing for one's self is indispensable in a new country." So says De Tocqueville, seeking an explanation for the failure of his own race and the victory of its great rival.[2] None have admired this thorough New England democracy more heartily than those living under a very different polity. Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, wrote in admiration of Massachusetts,[3]—"where yet I hope to finish the remainder of my days. The hasty, unpersevering, aristocratic genius of the South suits not my disposition, and is inconsistent with my views of what must constitute social happiness and security." Jefferson becomes almost fierce in the earnestness with which he urges Virginia to adopt the township. "Those wards, called townships in New England, are the vital principle of their governments, and have proved themselves the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation. . . . . As Cato, then, concluded every speech with the words '*Carthago delenda est*,' so do I every opinion with the injunction: 'Divide the counties into wards!'"[4]

The town-meeting has been called "the primordial cell of our body-politic." Is its condition at present such as to satisfy us? As we have seen, even in New England, it is only here and there that it can be said to be well-maintained. At the South, Anglo-Saxon freedom, like the enchanted

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[1] Lecky: Hist. XVIIIth Century, I., 387.
[2] De la Dém. en Am., I., 423.
[3] Life of R. H. Lee: Letter to John Adams, Oct. 7, 1779, I., p. 226.
[4] Works, VI., 544; VII., 13.